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## Fate of LAUSD's adult education program remains uncertain

By Rob Kuznia Staff Writer

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The end of the school year is around the corner, and yet the fate of the Los Angeles Unified School District's vast adult education program remains uncertain.

On Friday night, educators, students, elected officials (or their representatives) and others will gather at the Wilmington Senior Center for a town hall discussion on the matter. The teachers union is organizing the event.

"We're all in a holding pattern, waiting to see what is going to happen," said Chan Bostwick, principal of Harbor Community Adult School in San Pedro. "At this moment I haven't heard anything from the central office."

Depending on the outcome of several high-stakes unknowns - such as the wildly unpredictable state budget and ongoing contract talks between LAUSD teachers and administrators - current scenarios for what the adult education program will look like in the fall vary greatly.

Under the school district's myriad proposals and projections, the scenarios range from the loss of about half of the program to complete elimination.

With the Los Angeles Unified School District grappling with a \$557 million deficit, adult education has been a prime target for cuts, largely because it caters to students who aren't children. The program currently serves about 337,000 students on 30 campuses throughout LAUSD.

In mid-March, the school board approved a worst-case scenario budget that eliminated the roughly \$140 million budget for adult education, but

left the door open for sparing segments of the program in the event of certain scenarios.

For instance, Superintendent John Deasy proposed restoring \$33 million in adult education classes should the district prevail in an arbitration battle with United Teachers Los Angeles. At issue was whether the district could impose four furlough days on the union. In late April, the district prevailed.

Also, Deasy has proposed setting aside another \$45 million for adult ed programs should the UTLA agree to certain give-backs for the upcoming school year.

At first blush, the district's recent arbitration victory seems to indicate that the adult education program will exist in some capacity next year. But teacher Ralph Ortolano, chairman of the UTLA Harbor Community Adult School chapter in San Pedro, isn't feeling optimistic.

Every adult ed teacher in the district has received a layoff notice, he said, and not one teacher has been called back. Ortolano added that he recently attended a hearing for laid-off teachers partially for the purpose of asking administrators if the jobs of any adult educators will be restored.

"I was informed that there were no plans to call a single one of us because the entire division was being eliminated and the budget for our program, as of Monday, was still officially `zero,'" he said in an email to the Daily Breeze.

Ernest Kettering, the director of adult education for the UTLA, said eliminating the program - which constitutes about 2 percent of LAUSD's total budget - would be devastating to the local economy.

"This is the most under-employed, under-educated adult population of any region in the United States," he said. "These programs help our adult population get the skills they need to go on to community colleges, move into better employment and get themselves on the first rung of the ladder."

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